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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000232

SIPDIS

DOE FOR GPERSON, CHAYLOCK
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COMMERCE FOR KBURRESS
STATE PASS USTR FOR ASST USTR FLISER
STATE PASS OPIC FOR ZHAN AND MSTUCKART
STATE PASS TDA FOR LFITT
STATE PASS EXIM FOR JRICHTER
STATE PASS USAID FOR GWEYNAND AND SLAWAETZ

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/25/2016
TAGS: [EPET](#) [ENRG](#) [PGOV](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: MOSOP LEADER: BUNKERING AT HEART OF NIGER
DELTA PROBLEM

REF: SEPTTEL

Classified By: Acting Consul General Helen C. Hudson, Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

¶1. (C) Summary: Ledum Mittee (protect throughout), a leader of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) decried the deterioration of the situation in the Niger Delta, and implied that bunkerers may have incited the attack on the Bonga offshore oil rig. According to Mittee, representatives of Niger Delta ethnic groups met on June 21 to consider a resolution to condemn kidnapping and bunkering; the resolution was voted down because Ijaw representatives argued that kidnapping and bunkering gives them at least some leverage over the Federal Government. Mittee recommended to the Vice President that he hold town halls and solicit position papers from Niger Delta ethnic groups as a way to start conversations about the summit; his recommendations were never followed. Like Chief E.K. Clark (septel), Mittee places the military and its association with bunkering at the heart of the Niger Delta problem. His anecdotes illustrate the region's internal struggle to control kidnapping and bunkering. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Ledum Mittee, leader of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), in a June 24 conversation with Acting Consul General decried the deterioration of the situation in the Niger Delta. The attack on Bonga had nothing to do with "resource control", he said. Instead it had to do with the "business people" in the Niger Delta who for some time have been facing stepped up naval activity that has made routes for illegally bunkered oil more hazardous. "The bunkerers incite the boys", Mittee said. The Niger Delta has the largest number of retired generals in the country, and most are involved in illegal bunkering of oil, Mittee said. These retired generals have great influence over military personnel stationed in the Delta, many of whom they once commanded. The bunkerers have reached a kind of saturation point; as competition increases, it becomes more costly to do business because there are more people who must be settled and bribed. Who stands to benefit from the attack on the Bonga rig, Mittee asked; "surely not some poor Delta fishermen."

13. (C) Mittee, visiting a village recently, observed illegal bunkering by military Joint Task Force (JTF) and State Security Service (SSS) personnel. He went to the head of the SSS to report the situation, but nothing was ever done to stop it; instead, he found himself being questioned by the SSS as to the reasons for his interest in the matter. The SSS knows every illegal bunkering operation in Rivers State, Mittee alleged, and participates in much of it. There's even a local refinery that has been established in one area, he said.

14. (C) A meeting was held in which 15 Niger Delta ethnicities, including Ijaw, Itsekiri, Ogoni and others participated on Saturday, June 21, in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State Capital. Under discussion was a resolution to condemn the "militants" for recent kidnappings, and to condemn bunkering.

However, some Ijaw participants, joined by other smaller ethnic groups, voted down the resolution. They argued that kidnapping and bunkering were one way to get at least some leverage over the Federal Government for concessions. They pointed out that the Federal Government, and through it the entire country, gets the benefit of the Niger Delta's oil, but the very people living in the area where the oil is produced get no benefit. Political will to develop the area is needed; the current peace has been bought with appeasement money from the states and from the international oil companies (IOCs) as a substitute for economic development, Mittee said.

15. (C) The Federal Government is not making a serious effort to resolve the problems of the Niger Delta, Mittee said. The

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government had a lot of good will at the beginning of the process, but that good will has now been squandered on distractions such as the appointment of U.N. diplomat Ibrahim Gambari to head the summit. The Niger Delta people expected to be consulted about the summit, and to be able to say what they want to be done. But there have been no consultation; Vice President Jonathan seemed more interested in building a political structure and in appeasing rather than engaging, Mittee said.

16. (C) A summit is the wrong vehicle for what needs to be done in the Niger Delta. A summit is an event; solving the problems of the Niger Delta requires a process. Back in October of 2007, Mittee said, he told the Vice President that he should conduct town hall meetings and consultations and solicit position papers from all the ethnic groups as a way to start the conversation. He also advocated that the Vice President try to solicit ideas about how the Government and the people could make reciprocal promises: for example "If the community keeps the peace, then the Federal Government will execute this project." By the same token, if a community damages an oil pipeline, public works for that community would be reduced by the cost of the pipeline repair. Through this mechanism, Mittee said, the Federal Government could isolate problem areas and address them. The Ogonis can police themselves, Mittee said, and need only a demonstration of good will from the government.

17. (C) The Nigerian Government has been remarkably insensitive to the needs of the Niger Delta people, Mittee said. The Petroleum Development Fund trained 1,000 PhDs from its coffers. Of that number there were only 14 from the whole of the Niger Delta, including two from Rivers State, and only one from Bayelsa. If the people of the Niger Delta had received a fair allocation of scholarships from the fund, they would have become allies of the government.

18. (C) Comment: Like Chief E.K. Clark (see septel), Mittee places the military and its association with bunkering at the heart of the Niger Delta problem. Mittee's anecdotes illustrate the region's internal struggle to control kidnapping and bunkering.

HUDSON